

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Federal Agency Name(s):** National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce
- **Funding Opportunity Title:** Bay Watershed Education & Training (B-WET) Program
- **Announcement Type:** Initial Announcement
- **Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number(s):** 11.457, Chesapeake Bay Studies, Education
- **Dates:** Preliminary proposals must be received by 5 p.m. eastern daylight time on November 17, 2003. Full proposals must be received by 5 p.m. eastern standard time on December 31, 2003.
- **Funding Opportunity Description:** The B-WET grant program is a competitively based program that supports existing environmental education programs, fosters the growth of new programs, and encourages the development of partnerships among environmental education programs throughout the entire Chesapeake Bay watershed. Funded projects assist in meeting the Stewardship and Community Engagement goals of the *Chesapeake 2000 Agreement* by supporting organizations that provide students "meaningful" Chesapeake Bay or stream outdoor experiences and professional development opportunities for teachers in the area of environmental education related to the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office's (NCBO) Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) Program was established in 2002 to provide environment-based education to students, teachers, and communities throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Using the environment as the context for learning has been shown to increase a student's academic achievement performance, enthusiasm and engagement for learning, and encourages greater pride and ownership in accomplishments. The environment can provide a platform upon which educators can create a curriculum that interests learners and revitalizes teachers.

The B-WET grant program is a competitively based program that supports existing environmental education programs, fosters the growth of new programs, and encourages the development of partnerships among environmental education programs throughout the entire Chesapeake Bay watershed. Funded projects assist in meeting the Stewardship and Community Engagement goals of the *Chesapeake 2000 Agreement*. Projects support organizations that provide students "meaningful" Chesapeake Bay or stream outdoor experiences and teachers professional development opportunities in the area of environmental education. The B-WET Program has an opportunity to help create a population that is knowledgeable about the Chesapeake Bay watershed environment. Environmentally educated individuals can become effective future workers, problem solvers, and thoughtful community leaders and participants.

B. Program Priorities

Proposals should address one of the two areas of interest: (1) "Meaningful" Bay or Stream Outdoor Experiences for Students; or (2) Professional Development in the Area of Environmental Education for Teachers. If a project will address both areas of interest substantially (e.g., each area represents 25% or greater of the total amount requested), potential recipients should submit separate proposals for each area. If one area of interest constitutes less than 25% of the requested funding, the applicant may submit one proposal under the area of interest that represents the majority of funding requested.

1. "Meaningful" Bay or Stream Outdoor Experiences for Students

The NCBO seeks proposals for projects that provide opportunities for students (K through 12) to participate in a "meaningful" Chesapeake Bay or stream outdoor experience. The Chesapeake Bay, with its tributaries, provides an excellent opportunity

for environmental education. In many cases, its tidal and non-tidal waters and the surrounding landscape provide "hands-on" laboratories where students can see, touch, and learn about the Chesapeake Bay watershed and the greater environment. In other cases, the Bay watershed can be brought alive to the classroom through a strong complement of outdoor and classroom experiences. The Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries should be considered a living resource that provides a genuine, locally relevant source of environmental knowledge that can be used to help advance student learning skills and problem-solving abilities across the entire school curriculum. Proposals submitted under this area should address the following elements and types of activities:

a. "Meaningful" Chesapeake Bay or stream outdoor experiences are an integral part of the instructional program: Experiences should be clearly part of what is occurring concurrently in the classroom. The outdoor experiences should be part of the division curriculum and be aligned with State (DE, MD, NY, PA, VA, WV) and/or District (DC) academic learning standards. Experiences should make appropriate connections among subject areas and reflect an integrated approach to learning. Experiences should occur where and when they fit into the instructional sequence.

b. Projects follow the scope and sequence of a "meaningful" Chesapeake Bay or stream outdoor experience: Experiences should be comprised of a series of concepts and perceptions appropriate for K- through 12-grade students and align with the ideals of a "meaningful" experience as defined by the Chesapeake Bay Program. See the Stewardship and Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences document: <http://www.chesapeakebay.net/pubs/subcommittee/cesc/c2k.pdf>

(1) From K to 5: Experiences should be neighborhood-based and reinforce such basic concepts as maps and models, habitat principles, and the concept of the water cycle and watersheds.

(2) From 6 to 8: Experiences should focus on team and class projects and investigations, conducted in or near water. Experiences should reinforce science, mathematics, and technology skills developed in middle school.

(3) From 9 to 12: Experiences should be first-hand knowledge in or near water and should relate to the earth and biological sciences, concepts developed in civics and government, and attitudes reinforcing responsible citizenship.

c. "Meaningful" Chesapeake Bay or stream outdoor experiences are hands-on and investigative: Experiences should include activities where questions, problems, and issues are investigated through data collection, observation, and hands-on activities. Experiences should stimulate observation, motivate critical thinking, develop problem-solving skills, and instill confidence in students. Experiences should not be limited to tours, gallery visits, simulations, demonstrations, or "nature" walks, but should encourage the student to assist, share, communicate, and connect directly with the outdoors. Experiences do not have to be water-based activities directly on the Bay, tidal rivers, streams, creeks, ponds, wetlands, or other bodies of water. As long as there is an intentional connection to water quality, the Chesapeake Bay watershed, and the larger ecological system, outdoor experiences may include terrestrial activities (e.g., erosion control, buffer creation, groundwater protection, and pollution prevention).

d. "Meaningful" Chesapeake Bay or stream outdoor experiences are part of a

sustained activity: Experiences should consist of more than just the outdoor experience. Though an outdoor experience itself may occur as one specific event, occurring in 1 day, the total duration leading up to and following the experience should involve a significant investment of instructional time. An experience should consist of three general parts, not necessarily occurring in this order- a preparation phase; an outdoor phase; and an analysis, reporting phase. Projects should provide teachers with the support, materials, resources, and information needed to conduct these three parts. The preparation phase should focus on a question, problem, or issue and involve students in discussions about it. The action phase should include one or more outdoor experiences sufficient to conduct the project, make the observations, or collect the data required. The action phase could include restoration projects, or activities that result in the environment changing. The reflection phase should refocus on the question, problem, or issue; analyze the conclusions reached; evaluate the results; assess the activity and the learning, and may include sharing and communication of the results.

e. Projects involve external sharing and communication:

Projects should promote peer-to-peer sharing and emphasize the need for external sharing and communication. Projects should include a mechanism that encourages the students to share their experiences with other students or with the community.

f. Projects demonstrate partnerships: Project proposals should include partners involving any of the eligible applicants. Partnerships refers to the forming of a collaborative working relationship between two or more organizations. The B-WET Program strongly encourages applicants to partner with schools and/or school systems. Preference will be given to those projects that focus on a school division or school system. All partners should be actively involved in the project, not just supply equipment or curricula. It is helpful to submit letters of support from the partners with the application package.

2. Professional Development in the Area of Environmental Education for Teachers within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed

The NCBO seeks proposals for projects that provide K-through-12 teachers within the Chesapeake Bay watershed opportunities for professional development in the area of environmental education. As the purveyors of education, teachers can ultimately make meaningful environmental education experiences for students by weaving together classroom and field activities within the context of their curriculum and of current critical issues that impact the watershed. Systematic, long-term professional development opportunities will reinforce a teacher's ability to teach, inspire, and lead young people toward thoughtful stewardship of our natural resources.

Proposals submitted under this area should address the following elements and types of activities:

a. "Meaningful" Chesapeake Bay or stream outdoor experiences are an integral part of the instructional program: Experiences should be clearly part of what is occurring concurrently in the classroom. The outdoor experiences should be part of the division curriculum and be aligned with State (DE, MD, NY, PA, VA, WV) and/or District (DC) academic learning standards. Experiences should make appropriate connections among subject areas and reflect an integrated approach to learning. Experiences

should occur where and when they fit into the instructional sequence.

b. Projects should be developed to provide teachers with the teaching of a “meaningful” Chesapeake Bay or stream outdoor experience and promote follow-through by encouraging teachers to implement a “meaningful” Chesapeake Bay or stream outdoor experience in their classroom: Projects should ensure that professional development experiences for the teacher ultimately benefit the student. Professional development opportunities should instruct teachers about a "meaningful" Chesapeake Bay or stream outdoor experience (for details see the Stewardship and Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences document at <http://www.chesapeakebay.net/pubs/subcommittee/cesc/c2k.pdf>) and encourage teachers to implement a “meaningful” Chesapeake Bay or stream outdoor experience in their classroom. For example, professional development courses could result in a lesson plan; provide teachers with materials, or resources needed for carrying out a "meaningful" Chesapeake Bay or stream outdoor experience in their classroom; and/or require teachers to document how they will incorporate what they have just learned into the classroom. A point of contact should be provided to the teacher for technical support during the school year.

c. Projects involve external sharing and communication: Projects should promote peer-to-peer sharing and emphasize the need for external sharing and communication. Projects should include a mechanism that encourages teachers to share their experiences with other teachers and with the environmental education community, e.g., presentations at conference, in-school service days, or other public forums.

d. Projects demonstrate partnerships: Project proposals should include partners involving any of the eligible applicants. Partnerships refers to the forming of a collaborative working relationship between two or more organizations. The B-WET Program strongly encourages applicants to partner with schools and/or school systems. Preference will be given to those projects that focus on a school division or school system. All partners should be actively involved in the project, not just supply equipment or curricula. It is helpful to submit letters of support from the partners with the application package.

3. Continuing Projects

The NCBO has existing grants that were identified as multi-year projects in the previous application process. Renewal grants will be awarded to continue these multi-year projects under this announcement pending successful review of a new application package, and adequate progress reports and/or site visits. Therefore, funding for new proposals may be limited due to funding of renewal projects.

C. Program Authority

16 U.S.C. 661, 15 U.S.C. 1540

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

This solicitation announces that approximately \$1.85M may be available in FY 2004 in award amounts to be determined by the proposals and available funds. NCBO anticipates that approximately 30 grants will be awarded with these funds. Applicants are hereby given notice that funds have not yet been appropriated for this program. About \$925,000 will be for proposals that provide opportunities for students (K through 12) to participate in a "Meaningful" Chesapeake Bay or Stream Outdoor Experience. Of the amount available for this area of interest, about \$100,000 will be awarded to smaller, community-based organizations that work at a local level to provide environmental education programs. About \$925,000 will be for proposals that provide opportunities for Professional Development in the area of Environmental Education for Teachers within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

The NCBO anticipates that typical project awards for "Meaningful" Bay or Stream Outdoor Experiences and Professional Development in the Area of Environmental Education for Teachers will range from \$10,000 to \$150,000. Proposals will be considered for funds greater than the specified ranges.

It is the intent of the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office to continue funding for with several existing relationships and to make awards through this program to these organizations pending successful review of a new application package, and adequate progress reports and/or site visits. Therefore, funding for some proposals may be limited to ongoing projects.

There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for all qualified projects. The exact amount of funds that may be awarded will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA representatives. Publication of this notice does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds. If applicants incur any costs prior to an award being made, they do so at their own risk of not being reimbursed by the government. Notwithstanding verbal or written assurance that may have been received, there is no obligation on the part of NOAA to cover pre-award costs unless approved by the Grants Officer as part of the terms when the award is made.

B. Project/Award Period

Proposals may be considered eligible for continuation beyond the first project period. Proposals may be submitted for up to 3 years. However, funds will be made available for only a 12-month award period and any continuation of the award period will depend on submission of a successful proposal subject to technical and panel reviews, adequate progress on previous award(s), and available funding to continue the award. No assurance for a funding continuation exists; funding will be at the complete discretion of NOAA.

Projects that plan on continuation must include in their first-year submission a full description of the activities and budget for the first year as described in this announcement, and a summary description of the proposed work and estimated budget by line item (without the supporting budget detail pages) for each subsequent year.

If selected for funding, the applicant will be required to submit a full proposal each subsequent year by the deadline announced in the following competitive cycle. In addition to the requirements for new proposals, continuing projects should include the accomplishments to date on the previous year's grant in their subsequent grant submissions.

C. Type of funding instrument

Whether the funding instrument is a grant or a cooperative agreement will be determined by the amount of NCBO's involvement in the project. A cooperative agreement will be used if NCBO shares responsibility for management, control, direction, or performance of the project with the recipient. Specific terms regarding substantial involvement will be contained in special award conditions.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants for both areas of interest (i.e., "Meaningful" Chesapeake Bay or Stream Outdoor Experience and Professional Development in the Area of Environmental Education for Teachers Within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed) are K-through-12 public and independent schools and school systems, institutions of higher education, nonprofit organizations, state or local government agencies, interstate agencies, and Indian tribal governments in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

The Department of Commerce/ National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (DOC/NOAA) is strongly committed to broadening the participation of historically black colleges and universities, Hispanic serving institutions, tribal colleges and universities, and institutions that work in underserved areas. The NCBO encourages proposals involving any of the above institutions.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

No cost sharing is required under this program, however, the NCBO strongly encourages applicants applying for either area of interest to share as much of the costs of the award as possible. Funds from other Federal awards may not be considered matching funds. The nature of the contribution (cash versus in-kind) and the amount of matching funds will be taken into consideration in the review process with cash being the preferred method of contribution (see Evaluation Criteria 4: Project costs at V.A.4).

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Application packages are available at: <http://www.ofa.noaa.gov/%7Egrants/appkit.html>

or on the B-WET website at: <http://noaa.chesapeakebay.net/education.htm>

The required forms are as follows:

Application for Federal Assistance: SF-424

Budget Information, Nonconstruction Programs: SF-424A

Assurances, Non-Construction Programs: SF-424B

Certifications Regarding Debarment, Suspension, and other Responsibility Matters:

Drug Free Workplace Environment: CD-511

Depending on the applicant, the following forms may also be required:

Disclosure of Lobbying Activities: SF-LLL (if applicable)

Applicant for Federal Assistance: CD-346 (Required for the following individuals- Sole Proprietorship, Partnerships, Corporations, Joint Venture, Non-profit Organizations)

If the applicant has difficulty downloading the required forms, he or she should contact Shannon Sprague, NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office; 410 Severn Avenue, Suite 107A, Annapolis, MD 21403, or by phone at 410-267-5664, or fax to 410-267-5666, or via internet at shannon.sprague@noaa.gov. The NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office does not have a direct telephonic device for the deaf (TDD capabilities can be reached through the State of Maryland-supplied TDD contact number, 800-735-2258, between the hours of 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.)

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

Proposals must adhere to the following provisions and requirements by the deadline of 5 p.m. eastern daylight time on [insert date 30 days after date of publication] for preliminary proposals and 5 p.m. eastern standard time on [insert date 75 days after date of publication] for full proposals. Failure to follow these restrictions will result in proposals being returned without review.

1. Proposals

It is strongly encouraged that applicants be involved in the preliminary proposal process and incorporate preliminary proposal feedback into the full proposal, however a preliminary proposal is not required in order to submit a full proposal. Applicants may submit a preliminary proposal prior to submitting a full proposal. Preliminary proposals will undergo an assessment by program staff and others to determine if the proposed project is aligned with program priorities. Regardless of any feedback that a potential applicant may receive in response to a preliminary proposal, the applicant has the right to submit a full application under the program. Applicants will receive feedback approximately four weeks after the preliminary proposal deadline.

Preliminary and full proposals must be complete and must follow the format described in this notice. If a project will address both areas of interest substantially (e.g., each area represents 25% or greater of the total amount requested), potential recipients should submit separate proposals for each area. If one area of interest

constitutes less than 25% of the requested funding, the applicant may submit one proposal under the area of interest that represents the majority of funding requested. Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of the NCBO as to the relative merits of the project described in the application.

a. Preliminary Proposal:

- (1) Applicants are required to submit two copies of the preliminary proposal.
- (2) Preliminary proposal format must be in at least a 10-point font, one-sided, and no more than two pages in length. Preliminary proposals that are longer than two pages will not be considered.
- (3) No institutional signatures or Federal government forms are needed while submitting preliminary proposals.

b. Full Proposal:

- (1) Applicants are required to submit one signed original and two copies of the full proposal (submission of five additional hard copies is strongly encouraged to expedite the review process, but it is not required).
- (2) Proposal format must be in at least a 10-point font, double-spaced, unbound, and one-sided. Copies can be double-sided.
- (3) Brevity will assist reviewers and program staff in dealing effectively with proposals. Therefore, the required elements described below may not exceed 25 pages.
- (4) Appendices may be included but may not exceed a total of 10-pages. Appendices may include information such as curriculum, resumes, and/or letters of endorsement. Additional informational material will be disregarded. Proposals must include the following information and it is recommended that they follow the format outlined below:

2. Required Elements

a. Preliminary Proposal Format:

- (1) Organization title.
- (2) Principal Investigator (PI).
- (3) Address, telephone number, and email address of applicant.
- (4) Area of interest(s) for which you are applying (i.e., "Meaningful" Chesapeake Bay or Stream Outdoor Experience; Professional Development in the Area of Environmental Education for Teachers in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed).
- (5) Project title.
- (6) Geographical area of focus.
- (7) Project objectives.
- (8) Explain how your project addresses State (DE, MD, NY, PA, VA, WV) and/or District (DC) academic learning standards and the definition of a "meaningful" watershed educational experience.
- (9) Summary of work to be performed (include demographics of the audience to be served and the number of students and/or teachers to be involved).

(10) Estimated total Federal funds requested.

(11) Tentative partners involved in project.

b. Full Proposal Format:

(1) Project summary (1-page):

- Organization title.
- Address, telephone number, and email address of applicant.
- Area of interest for which you are applying (i.e., "Meaningful" Bay or Stream Outdoor Experiences for Students; Professional Development in the Area of Environmental Education for Teachers).
- Project title.
- Project duration (1-year project period beginning to end dates, starting on the first of the month and ending on the last day of the month). Specify whether the project is being submitted with the intention of continuation beyond the first year.
- Principal Investigator(s) (PI).
- Project objectives.
- Summary of work to be performed (include number of teachers and/or students that will be involved in your project)
- Total Federal funds requested.
- Cost-sharing to be provided from non-Federal sources, if any. Specify whether contributions are project-related cash or in-kind.
- Total project cost.

(2) Accomplishments to date (if applicable): In addition to the requirements for new proposals, continuing projects should include the accomplishments to date on the previous year's grant. Describe precisely your accomplishments to date from previously funded projects through the B-WET Program (include your award number). Specifically, if your project is being considered for continuation beyond the first year, describe your accomplishments to date to demonstrate to reviewers that the project goals and objectives have been/are being met.

(3) Project description (15-page limit): Describe precisely what your project will achieve why, how, who, and where.

- Why: Explain the purpose of your project. This should include a clear statement of the work to be undertaken and include the following: Explain which area of interest your project addresses (i.e., "Meaningful" Bay or Stream Outdoor Experiences for Students; or Professional Development in the Area of Environmental Education for Teachers). Specifically describe how your project addresses each of the elements and types of activities relating to the project's particular area of interest (i.e., Section I.C.1. for the "Meaningful" Bay or Stream Outdoor Experiences for Students area or Section I.C.2. for the Professional Development in the area of Environmental Education for Teachers area).

- How: Outline a plan of action pertaining to the scope and detail of how the proposed work will be accomplished. Explain your strategy, objectives, activities, delivery methods, and accomplishments to establish for reviewers that you have

realistic goals and objectives and that you will use effective methods to achieve them. When accomplishments cannot be quantified, list the activities in chronological order to show the schedule of accomplishments and target completion dates. Project Objectives: Objectives should be simple and understandable; as specific and quantitative as possible; clear as to the "what and when," but should avoid the "how and why." Projects should be accomplishment oriented and identify specific performance measures.

- Who: Explain who will conduct the project. Include the following: List each organization, cooperator, or other key individuals who will work on the project, along with a short description of the nature of their effort or contribution; and identify the target audience and demonstrate an understanding of the needs of that audience (include specifically how many students and/or teachers are involved in your project).
- Where: Give a precise location of the project and area(s) to be served.

(4) Need for government financial assistance: Demonstrate the need for assistance. Explain why other funding sources cannot fund all the proposed work.

(5) Benefits or results expected: Identify and document the results or benefits to be derived from the proposed activities.

(6) Project Evaluation: Explain how you will ensure that you are meeting the goals and objectives of your project. Evaluation plans may be quantitative and/or qualitative and may include, for example, evaluation tools, or observation.

(7) Total project costs: Total project costs are the amount of funds required to accomplish what is proposed in the Project Description and include contributions and donations. Explain the calculations and provide a narrative to support specific items or activities, such as personnel/salaries, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contract costs, and indirect costs. The budget detail and narrative submitted with the application should match the dollar amounts on all required forms. Additional cost detail may be required prior to a final analysis of overall cost allowability, allocability, and reasonableness. Please Note the following funding restriction:

- Funds for salaries and fringe benefits may be requested only for those personnel who are directly involved in implementing the proposed project and whose salaries and fringe benefits are directly related to specific products or outcomes of the proposed project. NOAA strongly encourages applicants to request reasonable amounts of funding for salaries and fringe benefits to ensure that your proposal is competitive.

(8) Letters of support from partners: Letters of support should be included for partners that are making a significant contribution to the project, if applicable.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Preliminary proposals must be received by 5 p.m. eastern daylight time on

November 17, 2003. Preliminary proposals received after that time will not be accepted and will be returned to the applicant. NCBO determines whether an application has been submitted before the deadline by date/time stamping the applications as they are physically received in the NCBO office.

Full proposals must be received by 5 p.m. eastern standard time on December 31, 2003. Full proposals received after that time will not be considered for funding and will be returned to the applicant. NCBO determines whether an application has been submitted before the deadline by date/time stamping the applications as they are physically received in the NCBO office.

D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this program are not subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs."

E. Funding Restrictions

1. Indirect Cost Rates

Regardless of any approved indirect cost rate applicable to the award, the maximum dollar amount of allocable indirect costs for which the Department of Commerce will reimburse the recipient shall be the lesser of 25 percent of the total proposed direct costs for this program or the Federal share of the total allocable indirect costs of the award based on the indirect cost rate approved by an oversight or cognizant Federal agency and current at the time the cost was incurred, provided the rate is approved on or before the award end date. Applicants whose indirect cost rate would result in indirect costs above 25 percent of the total proposed direct costs may use the amount above the 25 percent level as cost sharing. If the applicant does not have a current negotiated rate and plans to seek reimbursement for indirect costs, documentation necessary to establish a rate must be submitted within 90 days of receiving an award.

F. Other Submission Requirements

All applicants are to submit hard copy proposals only. Facsimile transmissions and electronic mail submission of proposals will not be accepted. The hard copies may be submitted by postal mail, commercial delivery service, or hand-delivery. Proposals must be submitted to: NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office; Education Coordinator; 410 Severn Avenue, Suite 107A; Annapolis, Maryland 21403.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

1. Importance/relevance and applicability of proposal to the program goals (30 points)

This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities. For the B-WET Program this includes the following questions: Does the proposal clearly outline how the project is an integral part of the instructional program? Does the applicant demonstrate a knowledge of the division curriculum? Specifically, does the proposal address project elements and activities under Section I.B.1.a. and/or Section I.B.2.a.? Does the proposal include partnerships? Are there letters of support from the partners? Does the applicant partner with a school division or school system? Is the partnership a working relationship with all entities contributing to the project? Specifically, does the proposal address project elements and activities under Section I.B.1.f. and/or Section I.B.2.d.?

2. Technical/Scientific merit (30 points)

This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. For the B-WET Program this includes the following questions: Does the project meet the definition of a “meaningful” Bay or stream outdoor experience? Is the project design investigative, hands-on, and part of a sustained activity? Specifically, does the project address the elements and activities as defined in Section I.B.1.b.-d., and Section I.B.2.b.? Are the objectives defined in the proposal focused? Does the applicant demonstrate that the objectives are realistic and can be reached within the proposed project period? What is the likelihood of the proposed environmental activities to improve the general understanding of the environment? Does the proposal suggest a new approach to environmental education, or just an application of previously accepted approaches? Does the project design include a project evaluation that ensures that the goals and objectives of the project will be met?

3. Overall qualifications of applicants (10 points)

This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. For the B-WET Program this includes the following questions: Does the applicant demonstrate a knowledge of the target audience? Does the applicant demonstrate a knowledge of the academic learning standards? Does the applicant document past collaborations with schools or school systems? Does the applicant show the capability and experience in successfully completing similar projects?

4. Project costs (20 points)

This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. For the B-WET Program this includes the following questions: Does the applicant demonstrate the ability to leverage other resources? Is the nature of the cost share cash or in-kind? Is the budget request reasonable and does the applicant justify the proposed budget request? Is a significant percentage of the budget directly related to bringing students and teachers in contact

with the environment? Are requested funds for salaries and fringe benefits only for those personnel who are directly involved in implementing the proposed project and/or are directly related to specific products or outcomes of the proposed project? Review Panel Only: Is the proposed budget suitable to the geographic area?

5. Outreach and education (10 points)

This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. For the B-WET Program this includes the following question: Does the project involve external sharing and communication?

B. Review and Selection Process

1. Initial Evaluation of the Applications

Once a full application has been received by NCBO, an initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application.

2. Technical Review

Applications meeting the requirements of this solicitation will undergo an external technical review. Technical review is conducted by a minimum of three mail reviewers. Each reviewer will individually evaluate and score proposals (1-100 points) using the evaluation criteria provided in Section V.A. This review will generally involve individuals in the field of environmental education from both NOAA and non-NOAA organizations throughout the United State. The technical reviewers' ratings will be used to produce a rank order of the proposals. No consensus advice will be given by the technical reviewers.

3. Review Panel

The NCBO will convene a review panel consisting of at least three regional experts in the field of environmental education from NOAA and non-NOAA organizations. The review panel will discuss the projects as a panel, incorporating the evaluation provided by the technical reviewers. Each member of the panel will individually score the proposals using the evaluation criteria set forth in Section V.A. taking into consideration the technical reviews. No consensus advice will be given by the review panel members.

C. Selection Factors

The Chesapeake Bay B-WET Coordinator may, in consultation with NCBO staff, review the ranking of the proposals and recommendations of the review panel and make recommendations to the Selecting Official. The Selecting Official shall award in rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon the following factors:

1. Availability of funding

2. Balance/distribution of funds
 - a. Geographically
 - b. By type of institutions
 - c. By type of partners
 - d. By research areas
 - e. By project types
3. Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA/federal agencies
4. Program priorities (defined in Section I.B.) and policy factors
5. Applicant's prior award performance
6. Partnerships with/Participation of targeted groups

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, review of proposals will occur during the two months following the date given in this announcement that the full proposals are due to the NCBO. Funding should begin during spring 2004 for most approved projects. May 1, 2004, should be used as the proposed start date on proposals, unless otherwise directed by the Program Officer.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants will receive notification that the application has been recommended for funding to the NOAA Grants Management Division. This notification is not an authorization to begin performance of the project. Official notification of funding, signed by a NOAA Grants Officer, is the authorizing document that allows the project to begin. Notifications will be issued through postal mail to the Authorizing Official of the project. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their proposal was not selected for recommendation. Unsuccessful applications will be kept on file in the Program Office for a period of at least 12 months, then destroyed.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Administrative and national policy requirements for all Department of Commerce awards are contained in the Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements published in the Federal Register on October 1, 2001 (66 FR 49917), as amended by the Federal Register notice published on October 30, 2002 (67 FR 66109). You may obtain a copy of these by notices by contacting the agency contact(s) under Section VII, or by going to the website at: www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/aces140.html.

Applicants whose proposed projects may have an environmental impact should furnish sufficient information to assist proposal reviewers in assessing the potential environmental consequences of supporting the project.

C. Reporting

Grant recipients will be required to submit financial and performance (technical) reports. All financial reports shall be submitted in triplicate (one original and two copies) to the NOAA Grants Officer. Performance reports should be submitted to the NOAA Program Officer (Education Coordinator for NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office). Electronic submission of performance reports is preferred. All reports will be submitted on a semi-annual schedule and must be submitted no later than 30 days following the end of each 6-month period from the start date of the award. The comprehensive final report is due 90 days after the award expiration.

VII. Agency Contact(s)

Please visit the B-WET website for further information at: <http://noaa.chesapeakebay.net/education.htm> or contact Shannon Sprague, NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office; 410 Severn Avenue, Suite 107A, Annapolis, MD 21403, or by phone at 410-267-5664, or fax to 410-267-5666, or via internet at shannon.sprague@noaa.gov.